

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6831

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5678

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT TS

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE ANNOUNCES INTENTION
TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

1. ON SEPTEMBER 10, CHEDLI ZOUITEN, WHO IS PRESIDENT OF TUNISIAN JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND PRESIDENT OF AFRICAN VOLLEYBALL FEDERATION, HELD PRESS CONFERENCE IN TUNIS IN WHICH HE DECLARED HIS INTENTION TO RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT IN THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS. ZOUITEN DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS THE CANDIDATE OF YOUTH AND DECLARED THAT HIS PROGRAM WOULD INCLUDE REINFORCING THE POWERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE FORMULATION OF A TRUE POLICY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THE GUARANTEE OF LIBERTY OF ASSOCIATION. ZOUITEN, WHO IS 40 YEARS OLD, HAS BEEN KODAK AGENT IN TUNIS AND CURRENTLY HAS FUJI AGENCY.

2. ON SEPT 11, THE FRENCH LANGUAGE PRESS GAVE INCONSPICUOUS COVERAGE TO ZOUITEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT, CHARACTERIZING IT AS HUMOROUS ACTION OF AN ECCENTRIC. L'ACTION BRIEFLY NOTED ZOUITEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND COMPARED IT TO THE PERENNIAL CANDIDACIES OF AN OBSCURE FRENCHMAN. LA PRESS TREATED ZOUITEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT IN GREATER DETAIL, BEGINNING WITH THE SAME TWO PARAGRAPHS OF L'ACTION AND GOING ON TO RECALL ZOUITEN'S "STUPID" CONTACT WITH ISRAELI DELEGATION AT A JUNE 1973 JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONVENTION IN NAPLES. LA
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PRESS ALSO ASSERTED THAT ZOUITEN HAD LOST KODAK AGENCY

IN TUNIS AND THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE
JUNIOR CHAMBER BECAUSE OF HIS FOIBLES.

3. ACCORDING TO CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES
MUST BE MOSLEM, 40 YEARS OF AGE, BE THIRD GENERATION
TUNISIANS, AND ENJOY FULL CIVIL RIGHTS. CANDIDATES MUST
BE REGISTERED FOR OFFICE (AND THUS, BY INFERENCE, BE
APPROVED) BY A FIVE MEMBER COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF
THE PRESIDENTS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SUPREME COURT
OF APPEAL, COURT OF APPEAL OF TUNIS, THE MUFTI OF TUNIS,
AND THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR.

4. COMMENT: ZOUITEN APPEARS TO BE A SLIGHTLY COMIC
FIGURE ON LOCAL SCENE AND GIVES NO INDICATION OF QUALIFYING
AS A SERIOUS CANDIDATE OF A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL GROUP.
IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, HOWEVER, HE TOUCHED ALL BASES
DEAR TO THE LIBERALS'S HEARTS. AT THIS STAGE HIS
INTENTIONS ARE UNCLEAR BUT THE MERE FACT OF CHALLENGING
BOURGUIBA WILL NO DOUBT IRRITATE MANY PSD LEADERS.
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